

Devore-Chase House
2000 24th St., N.W., NE corner
of 24th St. & Wyoming Ave.
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS NO. DC-288

HABS
DC
WASH
197-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS NO. DC-288

DEVORE-CHASE HOUSE

HABS
DC
WASH

Location: 2000 24th Street, N. W. (northwest corner of 24th Street and Wyoming Avenue), Washington, D. C. 197-

Present Owner: Mr. and Mrs. G. Howland Chase

Present Occupant: Mr. and Mrs. Chase and domestic staff

Present Use: Private residence

Statement of Significance: The Devore-Chase House, designed by William Lawrence Bottomley and built in 1931, is widely regarded as one of the most handsome, well-proportioned, and well-built dwellings of its period in Washington. It has been offered by the present owners as an endowed gift to the United States Government for use as the official residence of the Chief Justice of the United States.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: The following is an incomplete chain of title to the land on which the structure is built.
 - 1922 Lot 13, Square 2503 (75.0' x 127.50') was set off as part of a subdivision made on November 3, 1922. Plat is in Liber 9, folio 125, Records of Office of the Surveyor, District of Columbia.
 - 1930 Mary W. Cooke sold lot to Helen S. Devore on May 19, 1930. Liber 6448, folio 355, Registry of Deeds, District of Columbia.
 - 1961 Union Trust Company of the District of Columbia, trustee under the will of Helen S. Devore, sold house and lot to G. Howland Chase and Mary H. Chase, his wife. Liber 11624, folio 250, Registry of Deeds, District of Columbia.
2. Date of erection: 1931. Lot was vacant prior to 1931.
3. Architect: William Lawrence Bottomley, AIA (1884-1951).

4. Original plans, construction, etc.: Blueprints of details are in possession of present owners. Floor plans are missing.
5. Alterations and additions: Central air conditioning was installed circa 1956. Two-car garage at northwest corner of lot with entrance from house was built circa 1965 (Douglas Stenhouse, architect). Terrace at west end of garden was destroyed to accommodate garage, and new west garden wall was built.
6. Important old views: None known.

HABS
DC
WASH
197-

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

First occupants were Brigadier General Daniel Bradford Devore (1860-1956) and Mrs. Devore (owner). In 1969 Mr. and Mrs. Chase, present owners, offered house with endowment for maintenance as gift to United States Government for use as official residence of Chief Justice of the United States. Bill authorizing acceptance was still pending in Congress in January, 1972.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Interview with Mr. G. Howland Chase, January 13, 1972.

Records of Office of the Surveyor, District of Columbia.

Registry of Deeds, District of Columbia.

S. 2560, 92nd Congress, 1st Session, A Bill to establish the official residence of the Chief Justice of the United States by private gift to the United States.

2. Secondary and published sources:

New York Times, January 11, 1972, pp. 33, 43.

U. S. News and World Report, February 7, 1972, pp. 56, 57.

Washington Daily News, January 14, 1972, p. 27.

Washington Metropolitan Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, A Guide to the Architecture of Washington, D. C., Washington [1965], p. 119.

HABS
DC
WASH
197-

Prepared by Barry Mackintosh
Historian and
Denys Peter Myers
Architectural Historian
National Park Service
February 11, 1972

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Devore-Chase House is a suavely interpreted version of a French eighteenth-century hôtel particulier executed in limestone ashlar. It is notable for its fine proportions, restrained detailing, and superior finish and typifies the best stylistically conservative American domestic work of its period.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 88'6" (nine-bay front with 14'7"-deep forecourt between two-bay terminal pavilions) x 60'3". One-bay central pavilions on front and south elevations project very slightly. Two-and-a-half stories (dormers not visible except from rear).
2. Foundations: Brick and reinforced concrete with limestone exterior above grade.
3. Wall construction: Light buff limestone regular ashlar backed by brick. Walls have rusticated corners, molded water table, molded belt course at second-floor level, and flat string course continuing line of second-floor window sills.
4. Framing: Entire first floor is supported on reinforced concrete above full basement. Principal first-floor partitions are brick bearing walls. Second-floor joists are wooden.

5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: Front (east) entrance stoop of perron form is limestone. Front of base is paneled. Platform is approached by two curvilinear sets of broad low steps, each set having five risers with deeply molded nosings, ascending from granite Belgian block pavement of driveway. Risers and platform are guarded by wrought-iron railings supported by simple rods of same material. Panel below rail at front of platform is ornamented by scrolls and swags of Louis XVI derivation. Front railing has six small vasiform finials. Side (south) entrance from flagstone lawn path through French window has single block step. French windows open directly to north garden without steps below sills. Rear door has rectangular concrete stoop with two risers and iron railing.
6. Chimneys: There are four wide rectangular brick chimneys with slightly projecting two-course bands set well below small molded cornices. Chimney pots are square and tapered. Two chimneys are on east-west axis near junctures of pavilion walls with forecourt elevation. Other two chimneys are on north-south axis, one above west wall about 8' from southwest corner, the other somewhat south of center of house. Chimneys are painted to match limestone.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Note: On first floor, pavilion windows of east elevation and windows of north and south elevations are floor-length French windows opening directly on lawn and therefore serve also as doors. Front entrance has molded stone sill with deep nosing, molded stone architrave, and segmental pediment supported on carved consoles. Paired four-paneled wooden doors are set within deep reveal. Central window-doorway of south elevation has molded crosseted architrave with scrolled console keystone supporting a splayed eagle. Banderoles flutter beneath eagle's wings, and floral and foliate mantling descends from behind eagle's talons to flank console. Central window-doorway of north elevation has molded crosseted architrave with keystone and triangular pediment. Architrave is surrounded by rusticated ashlar. Back (west) door has plain architrave and paneled wooden door. Single wide counterbalanced overhead door of garage is wooden paneled door.

HABS
DC
WASH
197-

- b. Windows: First floor. Small rectangular windows without architraves flank front entrance and are masked by wrought-iron grilles. Other forecourt windows have flat architraves with keystones and paired wooden French windows of four-light sash set below fixed two-light transoms. Pavilion and south elevation windows (except central south window noted above) have similar architraves, but sash are three-light with paneled lower sections. North windows are like those of south elevation, but architraves are crosseted and molded and (except central window) have segmental pediments. The three north windows alternate with blind windows with flat architraves.

Second floor. Windows have flat architraves with keystones. French windows have four-light sash. Central north and south windows have very shallowly projecting wrought-iron railings set below them. Large round-arched window on west elevation above flat kitchen roof lights main stairs. Fixed wooden sash has 37 lights, 24 of which are square.

Shutters: First-floor pavilion and south (except middle) windows have fixed-louver shutters headed by square panels with perforations of snowflake pattern. Second-floor shutters are similar but lack perforated panels.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: There are three hip roofs, one over central block with ridge running north-south, and one over each pavilion with ridge running east-west. Slightly projecting central minor pavilions of forecourt and south elevation have low limestone gables. Forecourt gable has sculptured motif composed of large central scallop shell with floral surround flanked by cornucopias of fruit and flowers. South gable sculpture is similar, except that central element is basket of flowers. Roof at second-floor level over kitchen, pantry, etc. is flat deck, as is garage roof. Main roofs are covered with thick rectangular grey slates with irregularly serrated lower edges. Flashing is copper.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Molded limestone cornice is supported on small bracketed modillions above plain frieze. Copper gutters are concealed within cyma recta limestone eaves which form capping motif of cornice.

HABS
DC
WASH
197-

- c. Dormers: West slope of main block roof is pierced by three dormer windows. North and south slopes of main roof have each one dormer facing south and north slopes of pavilion roofs. These are concealed behind the front chimneys.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: Front (east) entrance from open forecourt leads to rectangular vestibule approximately 7' deep. Inner entrance leads to hall 43'6" x 14' with long axis running north-south through center of house. East of hall, facing forecourt, are two dressing rooms approximately 6' x 14' entered from hall. Two lavatories approximately 6' x 4' flank vestibule and are entered from dressing rooms. West wall of hall has main stairs in exedra at center, door to elevator at south end, and door to service passage at north end. Doorway in center of hall south wall opens to smaller hall 9' x 20'10". Library 17' x 21'10" occupies southeast corner, and dining room 19'6" x 26' occupies southwest corner, both opening from smaller hall, which has French doors to south lawn. Drawing room 39' x 19'6" occupies northeast corner and is entered from door centered on north wall of hall. Axial placement of main area doorways permits clear vistas through house from south entrance through drawing room and from dining room through library. Room approximately 19'6" x 15', originally fitted up apparently as informal dining room but now used as laundry, occupies northwest corner and is entered from service passage. Entrance to garage has been cut through in northwest corner of this room. Service passage turns south at right angle to run between enclosed back stairs on east and larder on west to kitchen. Secondary passage runs between cellar stairs on north and larder on south to rear entrance in west elevation. Pantry is between kitchen and dining room.
- b. Second floor: Note: Outline of second floor plan is H-shaped with rear pavilions flanking deck roof over kitchen, pantry, etc. Above west portion of main hall is passage approximately 7' x 43'6" entered from main stairs and through doors from back stairs and elevator. Two chambers with bath between them occupy area over dressing rooms, lavatories, vestibule, and east portion of main hall. Master chamber is over library with bath over south hall. Upstairs living room is over dining room. Another master chamber and bath are over drawing room. Suite of two rooms and bath for domestics is in northwest corner.

HABS
DC
WASH
127-

- c. Third floor: Central passage entered from back stairs gives access to domestic's quarters and storage rooms.
2. Stairways: Main stairs ascend 22 risers from west to east in ellipse within exedra approached through distyle in antis opening opposite front entrance. Stairs are oak and have open string. String piece has flowing anthemion ornamentation in low relief. Riser ends are boxed and decorated by anthemia. Molded wooden handrail is supported by paired metal rods alternating with scrolled metal Adamesque elements enclosing anthemia. Newel is volute in plan and rises from curtail step. Central newel post itself is composed of small square base, reeded rod, and flared collar above which is spirally turned vasiform brass element supporting handrail. Wall opposite railing has wooden dado of fielded paneling. Oak basement stairs are entered from passage to rear door. Short run descends to landing. From landing stairs descend east in straight enclosed run to basement floor. Back stairs are entered from passage to kitchen. Stairs are oak and have square wooden balusters supporting handrail. Stairway is enclosed and turns around open well running from first to third floor. Runs are relatively short with intervening landings. Haughton A. C. elevator of 1,000 lbs. capacity runs from basement to third floor.
3. Flooring: Vestibule and dressing room floors are marble. Latter have inlaid designs of dark grey marble. Central motif of northerly dressing room floor is compass design. Main hall and south hall have parquet floors of diagonally set checkerboard pattern. Contrasting light and dark woods are apparently cypress and pine. Exedra floor of main hall has curvilinear basketweave pattern of same woods. Library floor is oak laid in herringbone parquet. Dining room floor is oak laid in diagonal basketweave parquet. Drawing room floor is oak laid in parquet de Versailles pattern. Most other floors are oak laid in straight runs.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Ceilings are plain flat plaster except in main hall, which has three square principal zones enclosing shallow concentric panels, octagonal at either end and circular in central zone. Three circular center-pieces are of Adamesque design. Vestibule walls are plaster, north and south walls having tall arch-headed niches for sculpture. Main and south hall walls are plastered, with plain dados below wooden chair rails. Main hall walls are articulated by fluted wooden pilasters with Composite capitals of Adamesque type supporting wooden entablature with modillion cornice. Above dado, main hall walls are covered with antique French

HABS
DC
WASH
197-

grisaille paper panels representing sculptural figure groups and trophies in the neo-classical manner. Among the subjects are the Judgement of Paris, Diana and Venus, the Vengeance of Ceres, and Time (labelled "Tems" instead of "Temps") and the Seasons. Library walls are fully paneled in unpainted pine. Walls are articulated by Roman Doric pilasters supporting entablature with denticulated cornice. Panels are fielded. Recesses for bookshelves flanking fireplace are arch-headed with keyblocks of console form and carved drapery swags in spandrels. Book recesses of south wall are rectangular. Dining room has fully paneled fireplace (west) wall. Above dadoes, other three walls are plastered and papered with antique French scenic paper representing romanticized landscapes and townscapes. Wooden entablature has pulvinated frieze and denticulated cornice. Drawing room is fully paneled in simple version of Louis XV style. Panels are painted and are basically rectangular in form with curvilinear heads. Above paneling is simple plaster cavetto cornice. Corners of room are rounded and contain open display shelves with concave cabinet doors below dado level. Most other walls throughout house are plastered. Second-floor living room is sheathed in pine.

5. Doorways and doors: All interior doors are wooden. Doors opening from south hall into library and dining room and from main hall into drawing room are paired, each leaf having three panels. Others are six-paneled single doors, except door between vestibule and main hall, which has three horizontal panels. Doorways between main hall and vestibule, south hall, and drawing room are arch-headed and have fanlights with curvilinear wooden muntins. Fanlight over doorway to drawing room is false and is glazed with mirrors. There are no doors hung in doorway from main hall to south hall. Above library door is broken pediment with lidded urn on podium carved as central motif. Dining room doorway from south hall has triangular pediment. False door balances pantry door on north wall of dining room. In drawing room, false door on south wall balances door to hall for symmetrical effect.
6. Decorative features and trim: Library windows have molded crossseted architraves above which are entablatures with salient center frieze panels. Dining room windows have molded crossseted architraves. Window lighting main stairs has molded crossseted architrave with keyblock. Reveal has fielded paneling. Sill is "supported" by scrolled console at each end. Drawing room window openings have segmentally arched inner faces and molded architraves. Library overmantel panel is framed with molding. Dining room overmantel is carved in Georgian manner with Vitruvian scroll at base, crossseted frame, frieze with center shell and rinceau foliage, and broken pediment. Second-

HABS
DC
WASH
197-

floor corridor opens to stairs and stairwell through triple-arched Roman Doric arcade.

7. Notable hardware: All hardware in major areas is designed to accord stylistically with interiors and is of superior quality. Handles of paired front doors are large molded knobs centered on lock rails. French windows are secured by vertical locking rods with finely chased handles. Brass box locks of dining room doors are elaborately engraved.
8. Lighting: Electric lighting is used throughout house. Main hall has three crystal-hung metal chandeliers of 18th-century French style, one of which hangs in stairwell. Library is illuminated by two-light metal sconces with eagle ornaments, and by lamps. Dining room has two-light metal sconces of elaborate 18th-century English pattern with wheat stalk finials. There is no central chandelier. Drawing room is lit by two crystal-hung metal twelve-light chandeliers of French 18th-century type, four two-light metal and crystal sconces, and lamps.
9. Heating: Central heating is provided by hot air system. House is also centrally air-conditioned. Major rooms have fireplaces. Library fireplace, centered on north wall, is lined with brick set in herringbone pattern. Surround is faced with black marble. Mantelpiece is pine. Salient center panel in frieze has carved urn. Cyma recta edge of mantel shelf is carved with glyphs. Dining room fireplace, centered on west wall, is like that in library. Mantelpiece of painted wood is composed of crosseted surround with egg and dart molding framing the black marble, pilasters headed by acanthus-carved scrolled consoles, and entablature with denticulated cornice (shelf) and frieze with carved eagle on salient center panel and end blocks with paterae. Drawing room fireplace, centered on south wall, has small carved breccia marble mantelpiece of Louis XV design. Principal chambers and second-floor living room also have fireplaces.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: House faces east on northwest corner lot measuring 127.50' x 75' and is sited about 18' from east and south property lines. Public 15'-wide alley borders property on north. Numerous embassies are in immediate neighborhood, which is prime residential area.

HABS
DC
WASH
197-

2. Enclosures: Low limestone retaining wall with molded coping borders property on south and east. South wall has opening to lawn path, and east wall has two openings for driveway. Garden north of house is enclosed on north and west by high brick walls. West garden wall is side of garage and has perron similar to front entrance platform at center in front of rusticated blind arch. This feature, now merely ornamental, was originally west exit from garden and was moved eastward when garage was built.
3. Outbuildings: Brick flat-roofed two-car garage attached to northwest corner of house opens on alley.
4. Walks: South lawn has flagstone walk from sidewalk to south entrance. Garden walks are flagstone. Walk to rear (west) door is cement. Semicircular driveway in forecourt is paved with granite blocks.
5. Landscaping: Low yew hedge is planted behind south and east retaining walls. Southeast corner of property is screened by high privet hedge behind yew hedge. Clusters of box are planted in forecourt. North garden has box and other shrubs. There is large magnolia tree in northeast corner. House walls have ivy and some Virginia creeper vines confined to first floor. Landscaping is relatively, but not strictly, formal.

Prepared by Denys Peter Myers
Architectural Historian
National Park Service
February 23, 1972